

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

June 1 – 30, 2006

This is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and in New Mexico on the Gila National Forest (GNF). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 1-888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov>. Past updates may also be viewed on either Web site or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency, cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (USDA-WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT). Other entities cooperate through the Adaptive Management Work Group that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including the San Carlos Apache Tribe (SCAT), the Turner Endangered Species Fund (TESF) and Defenders of Wildlife.

Due to current denning behavior and the sensitivity of den location information, the latest wolf distribution map will provide wolf pack home range information rather than the most recent three months of wolf aerial locations. To view this map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. Under "Mexican Wolf Conservation and Management," scroll down to the links under "Distribution."

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 1-888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD's 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 1-800-352-0700.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks the history of all known Mexican wolves. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 18 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter "A" preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: For the purposes of the Monthly Update, a "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars sometimes form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are reasonably resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of the end of June, the collared population consisted of 20* wolves with functional collars dispersed among ten packs, including a single wolf.

* See the Granite (new translocation), Bluestem and Nantac packs below for more detailed information.

SEASONAL NEWS

Mexican wolf pups are generally born mid-April to mid-May. The IFT is actively monitoring denning females in order to document wild-born pups. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in seven packs.

NEW TRANSLOCATION

On June 5, project personnel captured M859 and former Francisco pack members f923 and f924 at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility. M859 is a single male that was captured on June 19, 2005, after a confirmed depredation outside of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area. The IFT captured females 923 and 924 as six-week old pups on June 24, 2005, as a consequence of the Francisco pack removal in New Mexico. All were given physical exams, vaccinations and fitted with radio telemetry collars. The following day, IFT members packed the group,

named the Granite pack, into the Gila Wilderness where they released the pack later that day.

IN ARIZONA:

During May, project personnel confirmed the presence of three wolves in the northwestern portion of the ASNF that may represent a new pack. The IFT initiated trapping efforts to capture, identify and place radio collars on these individuals. However, they suspended trapping efforts on June 19 due to lack of sign.

Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, M990 and m991)

On June 4, the IFT found Bluestem AM507 dead on the FAIR. The cause of death is under investigation. The IFT located AF521, along with M990 and m991, throughout June within the pack's traditional home range in the eastern portion of the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR).

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AF486 and AM619)

This pack continued to use its traditional home range northeast of the Big Lake area on the ASNF. The IFT located AF486 and AM619 together throughout June. Visual observations continue to confirm only the presence of the alpha pair.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM992)

Throughout June, the IFT located the Rim pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903, m927 and AM796, with a non-functional collar)

During June, the San Mateo pack continued to utilize areas east of Escudilla Mountain near the Arizona/New Mexico border.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Aspen Pack (collared AF667 and uncollared AM512)

Throughout June, the IFT located the Aspen pack in the eastern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

Granite Pack (collared M859, F923 and F924)

Within one week of their June 6 release, the three members of the Granite pack had split up; however, they remained in the Gila Wilderness in the vicinity of their release site. The following week, IFT personnel located M859 and F924 together, and they located F923 approximately six miles southwest of the pair. During the last week of June, M859 had moved over 30 miles to the northeast, returning to the area where the IFT captured it in June 2005. F923 and F924 remained in the Gila Wilderness within five miles of their release site, but still separate from each other.

Luna Pack (collared AM583 and m925 and uncollared AF562)

The alpha pair, AF562 and AM583, as well as yearling m925, remained within their traditional home range area in the central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared F861 and M871)

Throughout June, the IFT located these two wolves together in the central portion of the Gila Wilderness.

Nantac Pack (collared AF873 and AM993)

Since their April 25 translocation, the Nantac pack moved approximately 20 miles north of its release site, localizing just north of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. On June 17, following three confirmed depredation incidents, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for the Nantac pack. (See "Incidents" below for more information.) On June 18, the IFT confirmed that the Nantac pack was involved in a fourth depredation incident. IFT personnel lethally removed AM993 later that day. During the last week of June, AF873 returned south 20 miles and the IFT located it on the June 27 telemetry flight near the Nantac pack's translocation site on the eastern edge of the Gila National Forest. Removal efforts continue for AM873.

Saddle Pack (collared AF797 and uncollared AM732)

During June, the Saddle pack continued to use its traditional home range areas in the southern portion of the GNF. The IFT located m1007 with the Saddle pack AF797 throughout June.

SINGLE WOLVES

Collared m1007, New Mexico

During June, the IFT located m1007 with Saddle AF797 in the Saddle pack territory in the eastern portion of the BRWRA. In future updates, m1007 will be reported as a member of the Saddle pack, barring dispersal from the group.

INCIDENTS

On June 5, IFT personnel confirmed that the Nantac pack was responsible for a depredation of an adult cow.

On June 9, IFT personnel confirmed that the Nantac Pack was involved in another cow depredation, as well as a probable calf depredation. They also considered another cow in the area to be a possible depredation by the Nantac pack. IFT personnel determined that the depredations investigated on June 5 and June 9 occurred within a 24-hour period, and therefore considered them one depredation incident.

On June 10, IFT personnel confirmed a second depredation incident by the Nantac pack.

On June 11, IFT personnel investigated two dead cows in Catron County. They determined that a bear killed the first; the second died while calving.

On June 12, a permittee reported a dead cow in Catron County. The IFT was not able to determine the cause of death, and did not locate any evidence of wolves in the area.

On June 14, IFT personnel discovered a dead cow near the Nantac pack location. They determined that the cow was a possible wolf depredation.

On June 14, IFT personnel investigated two possible depredations of a cow and a calf on the FAIR. The investigations revealed no wolf involvement. The IFT was not able to determine the cause of the adult cow's death and they determined that coyotes had fed on the calf.

On June 15, the IFT located three additional cow carcasses on the FAIR. They determined that a calf died from getting stuck in mud. A second calf had bite marks consistent with wolves. Although the IFT found no tracks or other wolf sign, they determined that it was a probable wolf depredation. The third investigation was of a cow in advanced stages of decomposition for which a cause of death could not be determined.

On June 16, IFT personnel confirmed a third depredation incident by the Nantac pack. On June 17, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for the pack.

On June 18, the IFT confirmed the Nantac pack's fourth depredation incident. They lethally removed Nantac AM993 that afternoon.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Nothing new to report.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On June 1, Shawna Nelson provided a presentation to over 30 employees of the Gila National Forest Black Range Ranger District in New Mexico.

On June 2, Dan Groebner conducted a wolf program for 22 Corona del Sol High School, Tempe, Arizona, students and teachers as part of their annual summer outdoor ecology field trip.

On June 19, Shawna Nelson provided a presentation to six participants of Educational Adventures on an enrichment field trip for adults of Yavapai College located in Prescott, Arizona.

On June 24, Dan Groebner gave a wolf project update to 17 board members at the Arizona Wildlife Federation monthly meeting in Mesa, Arizona.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Nothing new to report.

REWARDS OFFERED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 and the Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican gray wolves. A variety of public interest groups are offering an additional \$35,000, for a total reward amount of up to \$46,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the White Mountain Apache Tribe at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the federal Endangered Species Act, and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.